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Open Source Program Offices in Research Universities

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Open source plays an increasingly important role in society. Almost 90 companies (many of them Fortune 100) have now dedicated open source program offices (OSPOs) responsible for the implementation of the company's open source strategy. Industry is placing a high value on organizations who know how to leverage open source, as for example IBM's acquisition of RedHat for $34 billion indicates. Yet universities are just beginning to work on formalizing their relationship to open source communities and are discovering open source as an important alternative to traditional tech transfer. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation in their mission to reduce barriers in the research enterprise is funding the establishment of OSPOs at six universities, including Johns Hopkins, RIT, UC Santa Cruz, Vermont, CMU, and SLU. The US National Science Foundation recently created the new Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships (TIP) to accelerate development and deployment of new technologies. TIP programs are now funding efforts to create the support infrastructure around open source research products so they can mature into sustainable open source ecosystems.

In this talk I will make the case why universities should pay attention to open source and review some of the opportunities created by establishing an OSPO. I will outline the main lessons from founding and running the Center for Research in Open Source Software (CROSS) since 2015 and the new programs I am implementing as part of the OSPO UC Santa Cruz with funding by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the NSF, to accelerate reproducible research delivery with open source strategies and techniques. As case study I will give an overview of the Skyhook Data Management project that embeds relational data processing in the Ceph distributed storage system, with ongoing work to do the same for Argonne National Lab's Mochi exascale storage services ecosystem and Sandia National Lab's FAODEL data exchange libraries.

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